#### SOUTHEAST UPLIFT BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW 2007-2008

# **Southeast Uplift Mission:**

To assist the citizens and neighborhood associations of Southeast Portland to create communities which are livable, socially diverse, safe and vital. Southeast Uplift provides an organizational structure and forum to empower citizens to effectively resolve issues of livability and community development.

Southeast Uplift was founded in 1968 to halt construction of a freeway that would have divided southeast Portland, displaced homes and led to further socioeconomic deterioration. Volunteers who represent neighborhood and business associations, as well as community-based organizations govern our Board of Directors. Funding for our operations comes primarily from contracts with ONI to provide direct services, training, capacity building, communications and other support to neighborhood associations. Administrative fees for services, earned income and individual donations comprise the rest of our sources of revenue.

#### Staff:

Cece Hughley Noel, Executive Director Currently Vacant, Fiscal & Operations Manager Afifa Ahmed-Shafi, Communications and Community Engagement Program Manager Gary Berger, Urban Planning Program Manager Kristen Wiener, Neighborhood Leadership Program Manager Emi Pimentel, Neighborhood Volunteer Coordinator (AmeriCorps/VISTA Member) Tim O'Neal, Neighborhood Sustainability Coordinator (Americorps Member)

# Major Areas of Focus/Work

In 2005, Southeast Uplift completed a Strategic Plan to guide the work of the organization for the next three years. This year, we're continuing to expand upon our relationships and key partnerships with other community based organizations, Reed College, the Somali Women's Association, Portland State University, Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc., Central Northeast Neighbors and Portland Community Media.

Our **Strategic Directions** provides guidance to staff to implement the priorities of the neighborhood, business and community leadership in our coalition area in the following key areas:

- 1. Strengthening and Bridging Neighborhood Associations includes providing enhanced support to individual neighborhood associations and business associations encouraging interaction across neighborhoods.
- 2. Convening and Engaging the Full Diversity of Our Community includes creating education and civic involvement opportunities with a variety of approaches and tools.

- 3. Promoting SEUL's Identity: Broadening Awareness and Support includes telling SEUL's story in a variety of ways, celebrating meaningful successes, expanding public awareness, and broadening financial support.
- **4.** Energizing and Focusing the Core means identifying and focusing on top priorities. It includes building a strong leadership team through ongoing board and staff development efforts.

Our program areas and work plan have continued to evolve and respond to the needs of our constituency and the priorities of our neighborhood leadership and the Board of Directors.

1. The **Neighborhood Leadership Program** provides the core functions of providing targeted and strategic support to neighborhood associations in complying with ONI guidelines, state and local laws and builds skill and effectiveness for leaders to run effective organizations.

Provides a foundational program of support to all 20 neighborhood associations within our coalition area, focusing on outreach to traditionally underrepresented populations, provide opportunities for neighbors to build relationships through on-going and regular networks and training events, both formal and informal.

This fiscal year, we've added an Americorps/VISTA member to develop a pilot program to fully develop volunteer recruitment, retention and recognition methods for five key neighborhood associations in our coalition area. We've expanded our informal networking opportunities by adding monthly "meet and greet" events in the community for SEUL staff and neighbors.

| <ul> <li>Capacity Building Networking Forun</li> </ul> | m | S |
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- □ Leadership Training
- □ Cluster Gatherings and "Meet and Greet" events
- □ Toolkits and Resources for NA's
- □ Volunteer Recruitment and Retention support to NA's
- Organizational development support for NA's

### 2. Communications and Community Engagement

Further develops the communication strategies identified through SEUL's Strategic Planning process by providing strategic support to the neighborhood associations to produce newsletters, web sites and other methods.

- **Website development** resources for neighborhoods hosted on our site; re-design of the SEUL website
- □ **Electronic Newsletters,** calls to action, neighborhood news, weekly updates, support to NA's in developing e-newsletters
- □ Cultural Competency training for NA's; support for CBO's
- □ Community Asset Mapping partnering with PSU to identify CBO's in NA's; establishing connections with NA's and other groups

- □ Community Partnerships further development of support and joint projects to increase capacity and implement joint values and priorities with CBO's and other cultural groups in our coalition area.
- **Message development** developing our NA's success stories, utilizing popular education methods; marketing the value of grassroots democracy to build capacity, increase participation and receive support and resources.

## 3. Urban Planning Program

Southeast Uplift continues to provide support on an on-going basis to neighbors on land use and transportation issues, assisting residents in developing proactive responses to proposed development and land uses, traffic and transportation issues. The Urban Planning Program provides support for neighborhoods to build capacity and organize around key policy and livability issues in the coalition area. Activities run the gamut from hands-on community building events, such as Earth Day and clean-ups to influencing policies that address infill and development or identify priority traffic safety projects and programs in the coalition.

This fiscal year, we've added an Americorps member as the Neighborhood Sustainability Coordinator to work within this program area to conduct outreach, support neighborhoods in increasing capacity and plan for events that address policy and community building activities that pertain to sustainable, environmental, ecological and "green" components of livability.

- □ Provide information and referral to residents related to land use, transportation and other policy issues.
- □ Provide and support a forum for policy and decision-making through the Board's Land Use and Transportation Committee (LUTC.)

# 5. Community Participation Services

Southeast Uplift provides administrative and fiscal support to neighborhoods and supports community building activities by providing assistance for activities, such as block parties, community events, clean-ups. Our Community Participation services also supports neighborhood associations in fiscal and fund development activities, administers and tracks each neighborhoods communications funds allotments and provides directors & officers and general liability insurance coverage for neighborhood associations. Our major program areas include:

- **Fiscal Sponsorships** SEUL fosters community building by providing fiscal sponsorships and insurance for neighborhood events and block parties and to emerging community organizations that do not have 501(c)(3) federal tax status. Currently, SEUL stewards over 40 community groups through fiscal sponsorships that supports such efforts as residential speed bump purchase projects to the redevelopment of a former drug property into a community center.
- Information and Referral- Southeast Uplift acts as a clearinghouse for information about City, County and other local programs.
- Neighborhood Small Grant Program-SEUL administers the Office of Neighborhood Involvement's small grant program to provide support for outreach

to under-represented populations, capacity building and community partnerships through projects in the coalition area that support neighborhood associations.

# **SEUL Challenges**

Southeast Uplift recently completed a fundraising plan and a strategic plan that focuses on strengthening the core of the organization to be able to increase and diversify our funding, to re-instate program levels in the next FY – expanding our capacity in the next three years. In response to our Strategic Plan and staff turn over, we've addressed some challenges this past year, by developing a strategic organizational re-structuring plan to better meet the needs of our neighborhood associations and community partners to communicate more effectively, respond to policy and development pressures and to increase the number and diversity of participants, while providing formal and informal methods to increase their skill at being effective.

Our major challenge has been having **funds to increase salaries and retain enough professional staff to support our mission**. Unless **salary equity with city wages** is met, coalition staff turn over will remain a problem for SEUL and the neighborhood system it supports. This will become even more challenging and necessary as strategies from Community Connect begin their implementation phase in the next five years.

As our community becomes more sophisticated and savvy, their needs for *professional* support from the coalition office increases. The high level of collaboration with government and collective community action to address policy and technical issues that allows the community to respond to opportunities, such as the Tabor/Atkinson Community Commons project, could not have happened without the complex interplay of technical support from staff, the infrastructure of the non-profit corporation (the coalition) and the community who had the will and tenacity to solve this community problem.

However, SEUL is addressing the challenge of doing more with less by finding more efficient ways to provide service. This year we continue to work on updating and improving the technology of our website and database to provide more strategic support to neighborhoods by developing methods and tools to help them become better leaders. Although we've recently completed a technology assessment to guide us, we will need additional funds to invest in updating our database technology to better track volunteers, participant activities and donations.

Our goal last year was a complete re-design of our website to make it a resource hub for neighborhoods, provide tools, best practices and information and also host each neighborhood association site within our web. That effort is still in process as more sophisticated elements for the site are requested by our neighborhood leadership. We're currently undertaking a professional assessment of our brand and marketing strategies to better tell our story and engage a wider and more diverse population into civic lift through our organization. We anticipate greater awareness of the neighborhood system in general and Southeast Uplift in particular as we roll out this new brand and celebrate our  $40^{th}$  anniversary next spring. Additional funds will be needed to reach the goal of

# making the SEUL website the virtual classroom, meeting space and forum and fully implement its functionality for our neighborhoods.

Although we've ramped up our efforts to write grants and develop partnerships with other CBO's to find funds to support programs, the philanthropic climate amongst private foundations is not fully supportive of grass roots democracy and community building and we have not prevailed. A major issue has been in developing the message about the value and benefit of the neighborhood system to potential funders. This will remain an ongoing problem, as education and other critical government services are placing a burden on individual donors to address those needs. **Government must step in to provide increased resources and support for local decision-making and grassroots**democracy. The work of the neighborhood system is by definition, an extension of government in its truest form - community governance — a partnership with the community to solve problems and increase livability in our neighborhoods. It should be fully funded.